FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

193
27 R

SECURITY: UNCLASSIFIED PRIORITY: AIR POUCH

755.11/4-2650

For Dept. use only. RECD MAY 2

TO: Department of State

FROM: BRUSSELS 570, April 26, 1950 2 enclosures

REF: EMBTEL NO. 671, April 25, 1950

SUBJECT: LEOPOLD'S OPEN LETTER OF APRIL 24, 1950

EUR INDEX

ACTION EUR*

INFO DCR OLI* BU scm

There are enclosed the French text and a translation of the open letter written by King Leopold III on April 24, 1950 to Mr. Paul Van Zeeland who is attempting to form a Government in Belgium and has just returned from a conference with the King.

The letter makes it clear that the King will not agree as a condition to returning to his throne to leave Belgium if he should delegate his prerogatives to Crown Prince Baudouin. He indicates that he will only make such a decision after having returned and after having consulted with his government.

Robert McClintock
First Secretary of Embassy

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY J.L. SMITH DATE NOV 19 1982
RDS☐ or XDS☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

755.11/4-2650

Enclosures:
1) Three copies of French text of King's letter of April 24, 1950 which appeared in the Belgian press.
2) English translation thereof.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
1950 MAY 5 AM 10 50

CBWood:mlj
File 361.21

FILED MAY 16 1950

HH

ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

Translation

Pregny, April 24, 1950

Dear Mr. Minister:

My secretarial staff have brought to my attention the communications which you were invited to transmit to me on behalf of certain members of the Socialist and Liberal delegations; these gentlemen, desirous of being assured that the royal prerogatives which I intend to delegate to Prince Baudouin will be effectively exercised by him, ask me if I intend to leave the country during the first weeks following this delegation.

By taking the initiative in attempting to put an end to the present crisis by the suggestion of a solution of appeasement, I have only been guided, as you know, by the wish of assuring a just equilibrium between the rights of the majority and those of the minority, and of making reconciliation between Belgians possible.

I do not conceal from you that I am astonished, after the gesture which I have made--and by virtue of which I believe that I may claim the confidence of the Belgians--to see discussions arise on the subject of my presence in the country. The publicity which has been given to these discussions and the significance which certain people attached to my leaving the country remove all possibility of my undertaking at this time, and as a condition of my return, the engagement of leaving Belgium, even temporarily, after the delegation of my prerogatives to the Crown Prince, without the risk of causing a serious loss of prestige to the dignity of the institution of monarchy.

Drawing upon the proposals which had been submitted to me, I have made a suggestion. May it be accepted in the spirit in which I have presented it, that is to say with good will and good faith, and I will follow it loyally by taking with my responsible government, and after having held widespread consultations, the measures necessary to assure to the Crown Prince the effective exercise of the royal prerogatives during the period that the delegation will last. There is absolutely no need under these circumstances that I be asked for guarantees which can add nothing to the value of my word.

The turn which the negotiations are taking is of a type which may cause the country to lose the benefit of the rapprochment which manifested itself between the parties after the publication of my message.

It seems to me, however, that it should be possible to bring about the agreement of the parties along the lines which I have indicated.

Please believe, Mr. Minister, in my best sentiments.

/s/ LEOPOLD

UNCLASSIFIED

Enc. No. 1 to Brussels Desp. No. 570
of April 26, 1950

From La Nation Belge of April 26, 1950.

La lettre du Roi

Voici le texte de la déclaration remise par le Roi à M. Van Zeeland, et qui a été rendue publique, mardi midi :

Prégny, le 24 avril 1950.

Monsieur le Ministre,

Mon Secrétariat m'a fait parvenir les communications que vous avez été invité à me faire transmettre de la part de certains membres des délégations socialiste et libérale; celles-ci, voulant être assurées de ce que les prérogatives royales que je compte déléguer au Prince Baudouin seraient exercées par lui effectivement, me demandent si j'ai l'intention de quitter le pays pendant les premières semaines qui suivront cette délégation.

Voici ma réponse:

En prenant l'initiative de tenter de mettre fin à la crise actuelle par la suggestion d'une solution d'apaisement, je n'ai été guidé, vous le savez, que par le souci d'assurer un juste équilibre entre les droits de la majorité et ceux de la minorité, et de rendre possible la réconciliation entre les Belges.

Je ne vous cache pas que je m'étonne, après le geste que j'ai fait — et en vertu duquel je crois pouvoir réclamer la confiance des Belges — de voir surgir des discussions au sujet de ma présence dans le pays.

La publicité faite autour de ces discussions et la signification que certains donnent à mon éloignement du pays excluent pour moi toute possibilité de prendre actuellement, et comme une condition de mon retour, l'engagement de quitter la Belgique, fut-ce temporairement, après la délégation de mes prérogatives au Prince Héritier, sans risquer de porter une grave atteinte à la dignité de l'institution monarchique.

M'inspirant des propositions qui m'avaient été soumises, j'ai fait une suggestion. Qu'elle soit acceptée dans l'esprit où je l'ai présentée, c'est-à-dire avec bonne volonté et bonne foi, et je l'exécuterai loyalement en prenant avec mon gouvernement responsable, et après avoir procédé à de larges consultations, les mesures nécessaires pour assurer au Prince Héritier l'exercice effectif des prérogatives royales pendant la période que durera la délégation. Point n'est besoin pour cela que l'on me demande des garanties qui ne peuvent rien ajouter à la valeur de ma parole.

La tournure que prennent les négociations est de nature à faire perdre au pays le bénéfice du rapprochement qui s'était manifesté entre les partis après la publication de mon message.

Il me paraît cependant qu'il devrait être possible de réaliser l'accord des partis sur les bases que j'ai indiquées.

Croyez, Monsieur le Ministre, à mes sentiments les meilleurs.

(Sé) LEOPOLD.